



"Serving Michigan's Cattlemen Since 1960"

September 24, 2009

Senate Agriculture and Bioeconomy Committee
P O Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of the Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA), I am writing to indicate our organization's opposition to the substitute version for House Bill No. 5127, a bill that would permit only 12 months for Michigan's veal growers to transition to group housing.

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA) urges Michigan Senators to oppose this unfair bill. If this bill passes, Michigan will be the first state to enforce such an unreasonable timeline. Even California's Proposition 2 provided a 7-year transition period on their ballot issue.

It is disappointing that the veal industry was not included in the negotiation process and even more disturbing that the revised HB 5127 ignores the leadership shown by veal producers on animal housing. The American Veal Association passed a resolution in 2007 to support an industry transition to group housing by 2017. The positive news is that the industry is moving very aggressively in that direction. In fact, the American Veal Association reports that approximately 30 percent of veal calves today are raised in group housing, including some raised in Michigan.

During these difficult economic times, it is unreasonable to expect any producer to access the capital that would be necessary to retrofit a facility within 12 months. Veal growers, like many of their fellow livestock producers have struggled to maintain profitability and are not in a position to incur the unexpected expenses that this bill would require. Quite simply, you will be putting them out of business. In addition, this would create a ripple affect which would impact a Detroit veal packing plant, the Amish and Mennonite farming communities that raise the calves (15% nationwide) and the dairy industry that makes available the calves and milk products for feed.

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association calls for the Senate Agriculture Committee to take the veal industry's concerns into consideration and remove veal from the bill completely or at a minimum amend the bill to ensure that veal growers have the same 10-year transition period granted to pork and egg producers to meet the proposed prohibition on the use of stalls or cages for pork, eggs and veal.

Sincerely,

Garry Wiley
President